Letter RO-7 – Save Our Mojave

RO-7-1 This comment provides an introduction to the commenter. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis; therefore, no further response is provided.

RO-7-2 This comment provides an overview of the proposed Project. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis; therefore, no further response is provided.

RO-7-3 The commenter makes a statement that "the EIR is not a 'good faith effort at full disclosure'." The commenter provides no specific examples and does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis; therefore, no further response is provided.

RO-7-4 The commenter states "the Project does not adequately mitigate the impact of the Project on the environment and on the local wildlife." The commenter provides no specific examples; therefore, it is not possible to provide further response.

RO-7-5 The comment states that the Project area includes pristine coastal sage scrub and chaparral and that Proctor Valley is an important wildlife corridor. The comment further states that the proposed Project will inhibit the migration of numerous wild species and cause species segmentations and extinctions. In response, Alternative H is consistent with the County of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan. This consistency is important because the overall end result of the implementation of the MSCP is that it provides for large, connected preserve areas that address a number of species needs at the habitat level (rather than species-by-species or area-by-area). This creates a more efficient and effective preserve system as well as better protection for the rare, threatened, and endangered species in the region. The County MSCP Subarea Plan identifies areas for development and areas for preservation. Alternative H is consistent with the Subarea Plan and would maintain and implement the originally designated hardline Preserve as identified in the Otay Ranch RMP, MSCP County Subarea Plan, and Implementing Agreement. Therefore, it would retain the functions and values of the wildlife corridors identified in Baldwin Otay Ranch Wildlife Corridor Studies (Ogden 1992)[1] and the Biological Resource Core Areas identified in the MSCP Plan. Additionally, a wildlife crossing has been proposed that will help prevent road kill and will promote safe movement from the Preserve within Alternative H and other preserve areas south of and across Otay Lakes Road. Thus, the Project would not inhibit migration and cause segmentations and extinctions. Discussion of the existing wildlife corridors and proposed wildlife culvert are included in Section 2 of Appendix D-3.

RO-7-6 The comment expresses concern regarding harm to the environment and wildlife during and after construction of the proposed Project. The proposed Project is within the overall boundary of the MSCP; however, the Alternative H development is not proposed within areas designated as preserve under the MSCP. Alternative H is consistent with the design of development and preserve as outlined in the MSCP. In addition, the Project proposes to preserve additional

[1] Ogden Environmental and Energy Services Company (Ogden). 1992. *Final Program Environmental Impact Report – Otay Ranch*. Prepared for Otay Ranch Joint Planning Project. December.

Conserved Open Space for other rare resources such as San Diego thornmint and vernal pools and to lessen edge effects by conserving areas that are currently designated as development. A number of mitigation measures address protection during and after construction, including M-BI-1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16. Additional discussion of impacts and avoidance or consistency of Alternative H with the MSCP is provided in Section 2 of Appendix D-3.

RO-7-7 The comment expresses concern regarding the impact of Alternative H on Quino checkerspot butterfly. The comment also provides information regarding the Quino checkerspot butterfly and concludes that the proposed Project puts this species' habitat at risk. Please see Global Response R4: Quino Checkerspot Butterfly for a discussion of existing conditions, impacts, and mitigation for the species. Alternative H provides a total of 1,177 acres of Otay Ranch RMP Preserve and Conserved Open Space for biological resources, which includes Quino checkerspot butterfly habitat. The Preserve and other refuge areas are designed to provide connectivity and host to a variety of species and habitat which are adjacent to the Village 13 property.

RO-7-8 The comment provides factual statements about Quino checkerspot butterflies in the ecosystem and data found in the DEIR (2015). The comment also notes the volume of host plants within the Project site boundaries and states the proposed Conserved Open Space is inconsequential compared to acres of lost habitat caused by the proposed Project. The total Otay Ranch RMP Preserve will include 1,107 acres and the Conserved Open Space will include 70 acres. The Conserved Open Space will be protected by a biological open space easement or transferred to the Otay Ranch RMP Preserve at a later date. Please see Global Response R4: Quino Checkerspot Butterfly and Response to Comment RA-2 for more detail.

RO-7-9 The comment provides factual statements about the function of butterflies in the ecosystem. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis;; therefore, no further response is provided.

RO-7-10 The comment states that the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Management/Enhancement Plan in the EIR ignores the impact of the development area itself and the construction period. The comment also states over half of the Project site would be occupied by development. The comment further states the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Management/Enhancement Plan does not address mitigating habitat destruction and disruption during the construction process and that mitigation plans do not provide confidence that the proposed Project would avoid larvae destruction during construction process. In response, the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Management/Enhancement Plan has been developed as a project-specific mitigation and monitoring strategy to ensure the continued occupation of the Project site by the federally listed endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly. The purpose of the plan is not to evaluate impacts. Implementation of this plan provides mitigation for onsite impacts associated with the construction of Alternative H and, when combined with an adopted Quino Addition and subsequent regional mitigation strategy, will assist in the recovery of Quino checkerspot butterfly throughout the County. This management plan describes the onsite preserve complex and history; biological resources, the management and monitoring strategy; area-specific management directives, including restoration; methods for conducting pre- and post-development surveys for the Quino checkerspot butterfly and associated

habitat; coordination between land owners and agencies; property stewardship; and fire management. Costs and associated funding for the plan are also discussed. Additionally, the development impacts approximately 37 percent of the site, with approximately 63 percent being set aside for preservation. The preserve and Conserved Open space provide approximately 1,177 acres of habitat that is suitable for Quino checkerspot butterfly inclusive of onsite areas that are connected to other preserves to the north, east, and southeast, where Quino checkerspot butterfly have been regularly observed over the past multiple years of surveys. Mitigation measures are included in order to avoid impacts to species within the Preserve during the construction period. These include construction monitoring, installation of protective fencing; establishment of a Limited Building Zone; covering stockpiles located within the development area; and avoiding use of non-native plant species, including standard BMPs for protection of adjacent habitat. See Global Response R4: Quino Checkerspot Butterfly for additional detail.

RO-7-11 The commenter states the surveys for Quino checkerspot were not adequate. For the reasons stated in the comment, the commenter recommends further surveys should be conducted over a longer period of time to determine the true impact on the area's Quino population. The Project surveys for Quino checkerspot butterfly were conducted in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2016, thus covering a period of 18 years. The results of the 2016 survey are included in Section 2 of Appendix D-3. A range-wide survey was conducted in 2008 and points were located on the Village 13 property. Surveys were conducted during both high and low population years.

RO-7-12 The comment also states that more extensive surveys should be conducted to monitor the hunting/nesting activities of golden eagles in the areas, as well as the impact of the proposed Project on the black-tailed jackrabbit population. The comment provides factual statements about the black-tailed jackrabbit and golden eagle in the ecosystem. The comment also states that more extensive surveys should be conducted to monitor the hunting/nesting activities of golden eagles in the areas, as well as the impact of the Project on the black-tailed jackrabbit population. The impacts of Alternative H on golden eagle, including golden eagle nests and foraging habitat, would be less than significant, largely because golden eagle is a Covered Species under the MSCP Plan and Alternative H is consistent with the MSCP Plan, the County Subarea Plan, and the Otay Ranch RMP. Alternative H would preserve foraging/nesting habitat for golden eagle (mitigation measures M-BI-1a, habitat conveyance and preservation, and M-BI-17, biological open space easement for Conserved Open Space). Additionally, mitigation measures M-BI-1f (fencing and signage) would provide mitigation for potential long-term impacts by deterring unauthorized activity within the Preserve. Please see Global Response 2: Golden Eagle. In addition, golden eagle habitat is protected in preserves established under the Otay Ranch RMP, which is integrated into the MSCP. The proposed Project is consistent with the MSCP and Subarea Plan and will dedicate significant land to the MSCP regional preserve, as required under the RMP. This dedicated preserve land contains substantial amounts of golden eagle habitat. The closest ***active*** nest—known as the Cedar Canyon nest—is approximately 6 miles from the proposed Project's boundary. Golden eagle nesting has never been confirmed within 4,000 feet of the development footprint, and nesting is unlikely to occur within that space because suitable nesting substrates are generally lacking. The proposed Project is located within a mapped primary foraging area for golden eagle. For Alternative H, however, no "take" of golden eagle is expected, nor is there any evidence that would support a determination that Alternative H will "take" golden eagle. For this

reason, while acknowledging impacts to golden eagle foraging habitat, it was determined those impacts would be less than significant. This determination is supported by (i) golden eagle's status as a Covered Species under the MSCP; (ii) the preservation of 1,085 acres of golden eagle foraging habitat onsite; and (iii) the preservation of more than 140,000 acres of suitable golden eagle foraging habitat within the MSCP plan area as a whole. The County agrees that San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit is present onsite, and it was recorded during surveys of the site. No protocol survey methods have been established for conducting surveys for the species. Thus, in a more conservative analysis, the acreage of suitable habitat for the species was used to determine acres of occupied habitat as well as acres of impacted habitat for the species. The analysis for the species was based on habitat rather than on the number of observed San Diego black-tailed jackrabbits which thus accommodates fluctuations in population size from year to year. The total acreage of suitable habitat for the species was determined to be 1,660 acres (Table 8 of Appendix D-3). Of that, 556 acres of suitable habitat is assumed impacted based on the Project footprint with 1,085 acres of suitable habitat preserved.

RO-7-13 The comment states that the habitat connectivity analysis is based on outdated assumptions and that the analysis needs to be reassessed to incorporate more up-to-date modeling for target species. The comment also states that habitat linkages should be species specific and evaluated based on habitat quality, vegetation communities, and topography, not just the width of the linkages. In response, the 1992 Ogden study prepared for Otay Ranch, which employed several criteria for delineating key wildlife movement areas. First, the Ogden study conducted on-the-ground field studies on Otay Ranch (as opposed to modeling potential movement patterns using remotely sensed landscape data such as vegetation, topography, and land uses) to empirically document areas of habitat actually used by focal species, including mountain lion, bobcat, and mule deer, as well as coastal California gnatcatcher and cactus wren; i.e., the study does identify areas where focal species use is concentrated and thus likely to be key for maintaining local and regional movement. Notably, species such as coyote, gray fox, opossum, and raccoon were not chosen as focal species because they adapt well to human modified landscapes (Ogden 1992). Second, the study considered the focal species habitat requirements and other natural history, and behavioral factors related to movement (e.g., tolerance of humans, primary mortality causes). Field data included scat and tracks (i.e., sign), and rarer visual sightings for focal species and all other terrestrial vertebrates. Areas with the most focal species sign were considered corridors (Ogden 1992). In addition, trail cameras were set up at selected locations. Third, the study incorporated information about what adjacent offsite areas are likely to remain undeveloped because of factors such as public ownership and steep topography that constrains development; the study focused on maintaining connectivity between the San Ysidro, Jamul, and San Miguel Mountains (Ogden 1992). Based on data collected in the field, Section 2 of the Ogden study describes the biological and physical conditions at each identified corridor, including vegetation, potential den sites (e.g., rocky areas), water sources, etc., that would be relevant for the function of the corridors for wildlife movement. For these reasons, the Ogden study is considered adequate for the assessment of impacts to wildlife movement and habitat connectivity in the Project area. The Alternative H Project site is surrounded by a variety of public lands: at least 22,000 acres of the Otay Ranch RMP Preserve, BLM, and USFWS lands to the north; at least 9,000 acres of the Otay Ranch RMP Preserve, USFWS, MSCP Preserve, BLM, and CDFW lands to the east; and at

least 31,000 acres of the Otay Ranch RMP Preserve, MSCP Preserve, CDFW, and BLM lands to the south. Combined, this totals 62,000 acres of open space. Alternative H is consistent with the approved Preserve boundary for Village 13 per the MSCP County Subarea Plan, and is therefore consistent with the previous wildlife movement study. While other land use changes have occurred within Otay Ranch, within the vicinity of the Otay Ranch Resort site and the corridors outlined for the Proctor Valley Parcel, no changes in wildlife corridors have occurred. Although landscapes in San Diego County have changed significantly in recent decades, the corridors identified in the Ogden Wildlife Corridor Study (1992) study are still viable and currently traverse between large areas of open lands. Several wildlife corridor and crossing studies have been conducted since 2010, either statewide or in the general Project vicinity (i.e., coastal San Diego County), including (i) the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project (CEHC; Spencer et al. 2010); (ii) Connectivity Project Studies as part of the San Diego Management & Monitoring Program (SDMMP;
(https://sdmmp.com/upload/SDMMP_Repository/0/cqn246dfsr0ybw9p8hv7mt5k1j3xgz.pdf);
(iii) the Comprehensive Multi-Species Connectivity Assessment and Planning for the Highway 67 Region of San Diego County (Jennings and Zeller 2017); and (iv) the Wildlife Infrastructure Plan for State Route 94, San Diego County Post Miles 15.27 to 30.00 (Conservation Biology Institute 2016). Based on the review of the literature, it is concluded that (1) none of the recent wildlife corridor studies cover Alternative H or the area surrounding it; (2) none of the conclusions drawn in the recent studies are inconsistent with or undermine the validity of the Ogden Wildlife Corridor Study (1992); and (3) none of the recent studies recommend measures materially different from those recommended in the Ogden Wildlife Corridor Study (1992). See also the global response on golden eagle. Additionally, as noted above for Quino checkerspot butterfly, areas onsite are provided connectivity and Alternative H provides connectivity to offsite areas that are occupied by Quino checkerspot butterfly. See Global Response R4: Quino Checkerspot Butterfly. For the San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit, habitat connections are provided that include habitat suitable for the species. These areas include areas to the north, east, and southeast. In fact, areas to the west and southwest would connect to the edge of Lower Otay Reservoir. Thus, all of the boundaries of the site adjacent to other areas of preserved land constitute habitat that could be used by the San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit. As noted above in the discussion on golden eagle, Alternative H is designed to be consistent with the MSCP preserve design. See Global Response 2: Golden Eagle. Additionally, as noted above for Quino checkerspot butterfly, areas onsite are provided connectivity and Alternative H provides connectivity to offsite areas that are occupied by Quino checkerspot butterfly. See the global response for the Quino checkerspot butterfly.

RO-7-14 The commenter expresses concern regarding western burrowing owl. Surveys were conducted for the species. No nesting burrowing owls were detected. One burrowing owl was observed during the non-breeding season in 2000 and has not been detected since that time regardless of the thorough surveys conducted on the Village 13 site. In addition, pre-construction surveys will be conducted per mitigation measure M-BI-16. If burrowing owl is detected, a plan will be prepared that receives review and approval by the County and Wildlife Agencies.

RO-7-15 The comment recommends that inspections for burrowing owl continue during construction. As noted by the commenter, pre-construction surveys focused on burrowing owls will be required.

In addition, ongoing biological monitoring during construction will be conducted by the biological monitor. While the monitoring does not specify burrowing owl, all sensitive resources (including pipes, culverts, berms) that might be used by any wildlife species (including burrowing owl) will be monitored during construction, including species protected during nesting.

RO-7-16 The comment notes that burrowing owls rely heavily on ground squirrels as a source of prey and states that the proposed Project's effect on ground squirrel populations is not discussed in the EIR. In response, Alternative H provides 1,177 acres of Otay Ranch RMP preserve and Conserved Open Space for continued occupation by ground squirrels.

RO-7-17 The comment states that San Diego fairy shrimp and western spadefoot toad are present in and around the vernal pools. The comment further states that disruption of vernal pools on the Project site would be "cataclysmic" to the viability of these essential fairy shrimp populations. In response, the vernal pools occupied by San Diego fairy shrimp within the K8 vernal pool complex would be preserved in the 69.8-acre Conserved Open Space area. The Conserved Open Space will include the basins, the watershed, and a buffer. Fencing will preclude access by the public. The Conserved Open Space will be conveyed to the POM for management or will have a site-specific management plan to provide management and monitoring in the long term. In addition, a restoration plan will be prepared. No runoff will be allowed into the Conserved Open Space. Thus, with the conserved and managed open space and protective fencing as well as a 100 foot buffer from the watershed of the pools, protection for both the San Diego fairy shrimp and western spadefoot will be provided.

RO-7-18 The comment is a factual statement regarding the biology of fairy shrimp. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the environmental analysis; therefore, no further response is provided.

RO-7-19 The comment states the proposed mitigation plan for the vernal pools is deficient and that restoring and protecting pools directly is not enough as upland habitats and runoff affect vernal pools. The comment also presents general statements regarding vernal pool fragmentation from upland habitats and the importance of nutrients transported from adjacent uplands. In response, the importance of the surrounding watershed of vernal pools as a source of nutrients is acknowledged and, as such, the proposed Project includes preservation of 12.5 acres, including the entire watershed of the K8 vernal pool complex. In addition, the 100-foot buffer is also included in the Conserved Open Space, which will provide additional buffer and potential food resources for the vernal pools (Section 2 of Appendix D-3).

RO-7-20 The commenter states the development would subject the pools to potentially hazardous runoff and would alter their hydrology. The commenter also notes that San Diego fairy shrimp are very sensitive to the hydrology and that fairy shrimp provide food source for aquatic species. The comment then states surveys of the Project's effect on vernal pools need to be far more extensive. In response, surveys for fairy shrimp have been conducted in 1999, 2000, 2003, 2007–2008, and 2014–2015 on the site. The Conserved Open Space for the K8 vernal pool complex includes the watershed for all of the vernal pool basins, as well as a 100-foot buffer. Fencing will preclude access by the public. The Conserved Open Space will be conveyed to the POM for management or will have a site-specific management plan to provide management and monitoring in the long

term. In addition, a restoration plan will be prepared. No runoff from the development area will be allowed to flow into the Conserved Open Space. This is accomplished by design in several ways. A majority of the Conserved Open Space areas are located at elevations higher that the development area, thus avoiding any potential for runoff conflicts. Where development areas are at similar or higher elevations, the grading for the residential lots, streets, and/or slopes has been designed to flow away or around the Conserved Open Space resource.

RO-7-21 The comment states that the proposed Project will result in "significantly compromised air quality" during construction and as a result of operation, due to the removal of stabilized soils. In response, construction-related impacts, including impacts from the generation of fugitive dust during grading and earthmoving activities, were evaluated in Section 2.2, Air Quality, of the 2015 Draft EIR. Section 2.2 concluded that the proposed Project would result in significant construction and operational air quality impacts. However, it is noted that construction is a temporary activity, and graded sections will be built upon or landscaped, which will not leave unstable, exposed soils through the proposed Project's operational period (see mitigation Measures M-AQ-1a).

RO-7-22 The comment states that the construction-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would "exceed the County's limits" and the proposed Project's operation would have a significant cumulative effect on net emissions. The comment also notes the EIR concludes that "even with full implementation of the mitigation measures," the proposed Project would result in a "significant and unavoidable direct impact to regional air quality." The commenter also states that a "development with this effect is unacceptable amidst the current state of our climate crises."

In response, please refer to Section 2.2, Air Quality, of the 2015 Draft EIR and the conclusions of Section 2.10, Global Climate Change, of the 2019 Recirculation Package. Section 2.2 concluded that the proposed Project's criteria air pollutant emissions from construction and operational activities would be significant and unavoidable, as those emissions would exceed the thresholds of significance used by the County of San Diego to evaluate air quality impacts. Section 2.10 concluded that the proposed Project's GHG emissions from construction and operational activities would be reduced to a level below significant with implementation of mitigation measures for the reduction of GHG emissions to a net zero level. While strategies for the reduction of criteria air pollutants can result in co-benefits in the form of GHG reduction, and vice versa, each subject area (regional and local air quality *and* global climate change) is unique and afforded its own separate discussion under CEQA (see, e.g., Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines). The significance conclusions for the two subject areas are not interchangeable.

RO-7-23 The comment states that public health will be impacted as a result of the proposed Project's construction-related activities. In response, please see the memorandum titled *Health Effects of Criteria Pollutants, Otay Ranch Village 13*, which has been added as Attachment A4.1 of these Responses to Comments. As discussed at length therein, no modeling tools presently are available that could provide reliable and meaningful additional information regarding the potential health effects of the proposed Project's criteria pollutant emissions or the Project's potential to result in further nonattainment days. Additionally, please see the memorandum titled *Health Risk Assessment for Construction and Operational Impacts, Otay Ranch Village 13*,

which has been added as Attachment RO6.5 to these Responses to Comments. This memorandum affirms the 2015 Draft EIR's conclusion that health risk impacts attributable to the Project's toxic air contaminant emissions would be less than significant.

As for the proposed Project's use of water for dust suppression purposes, construction is a temporary activity and exposed areas will be stabilized as soon as possible to minimize dust generation. Temporary watering of exposed soils during construction is a standard fugitive dust control measure and is used on all large construction sites. There are no wells onsite and typically, the temporary construction activities, such as dust control, is provided by water trucks. Further, as required by mitigation measure M-AQ-1a, dirt piles or other particulate matter will be covered using dust curtains, wind breaks will be installed, and non-toxic chemical soil stabilizers will be used. which would reduce the amount of water required for dust suppression purposes.

RO-7-24 The comment states that the proposed potable water usage will be unsustainable in the case of future years of drought. In response, the commenter is correct in stating that the proposed Project does not include the use of recycled water due to the proximity of the reservoir. As stated in the Draft EIR (2015) in Section 3.7.2.1, the Water Conservation Plan included in the Specific Plan for the proposed Project (Appendix VI of the Specific Plan) estimates water use of 1.42 mgd and a savings of 164-acre feet per year. In comparison to the proposed Project, the Water Conservation Plan for Alternate H and related Water Supply Assessment and Verification (WSA &V) Report – Alternative H (Appendix D-18 prepared March 2018 by the Otay Water District) estimates water use of 1.18 mgd and an additional savings of 296 acre-feet per year for Alternative H. The WSA&V Report demonstrates and documents that sufficient water supplies are planned for and are intended to be available over a 20-year planning horizon, under normal conditions, and in single and multiple dry years to meet the projected demand of Alternative H and the existing and other planned development projects to be served by the Otay Water District.

RO-7-25 The commenter voices a concern about the potential impacts of golf courses, which are included in two of the site development alternatives. The comment identifies pesticides and fertilizers as having negative impacts on aquatic life and vernal pools. In response, if one of the alternatives with a golf course were selected by the County Board of Supervisors to be the project that is carried forward, appropriate mitigation measures would be implemented, and applicable stormwater management regulations would be adhered to in order to reduce potential impacts from pesticides and fertilizers. However, this comment does not address the adequacy of the environmental analysis; therefore, no further response is required.

RO-7-26 The comment expresses concern that the proposed Project would increase the risk of a major fire in the Project area. The comment also expresses concerns about future drought and that wildfire could spread into Southbay communities. In response, please refer to the Draft EIR (2015) Section 2.6, Global Response R3: Structure Vulnerability and Ignition, and to EIR Technical Appendix D-21, Fire Protection Plan, for details on how the proposed Project minimizes potential for fire to impact.

The County disagrees with the comment's assertion that the proposed Project increases the probability of ignition occurring within its footprint and finds that the previously provided

information used to support the assertion does not introduce any substantial evidence supporting the statement. While it is true that humans are the cause of most fires in California, there is no data available that links increases in wildfires with the development of ignition-resistant communities.

This type of development with an unbroken landscape (as opposed to low-density wildland urban intermix projects) has been found to perform well against wildfires (Syphard et al. 2015: Fires at the Wildland Urban Interface: Lessons from Southern California[2]; IBHS 2008[3]). One study (Mann ML, et al. 2016: Human-started wildfires expand the fire niche across the United States) indicates that there can be initial increase in the "likelihood" of fires, but that this potential decreases as characteristics of the built urban environment and increased suppression efforts reduce it. "The human–fire connection in the modern era appears strongest at intermediate levels of development, as fires become less likely in the landscape beyond a certain population density, level of urbanization, or dependence on fossil fuels (11, 13, 24)." (Mann ML, et al. 2016) Additionally, the proposed Project includes managed landscapes and wide fuel modification zones that will provide protection for the Project, but also act as a buffer between onsite fires and the natural vegetation areas. In fact, Fuel Modification Zones (FMZs) were originally established to prevent structure fires from spreading into the wildland areas. Therefore, the dual role of FMZs is designed to minimize the likelihood that onsite fires can move offsite. If an onsite fire resulted in a wildfire downwind of the proposed Project, there is a limited fuel bed that could burn under fire weather conditions, but would be limited in its ability to create a significant wildfire due to the lack of fuel bed area.

Fires that start onsite would not have the readily ignitable fuels to sustain or spread within the site's landscapes. Further, structure fires would be effectively contained or suppressed by automatic interior fire sprinklers to be provided and fitted in every structure. Combined with the fast response from the onsite station, it would be difficult for an onsite fire to spread to offsite areas before responding firefighters could begin their firefighting tactics.

RO-7-27 The comment notes evacuation routes are "very limited" in the event of a major fire. The comment also expresses concerns that a two-lane Proctor Valley Road, congested roads in Chula Vista, and Highway 94 are inadequate for evacuation. The proposed Project includes a "Ready, Set, Go!" stance on evacuations. Accordingly, the ongoing resident education and outreach would result in a populace that is aware and prepared to evacuate when told to do so. A WUI Plan will be developed by the San Diego County Fire Authority specific to the Project site and development footprint, which would be implemented by the appropriate authorities in the event of a wildfire emergency to facilitate evacuation. Development of a WUI, or any other evacuation plan, is not required by CEQA.

[2] Syphard, Alexandra, Jon E. Keeley, Tess Brennan. 2015. "Fire at the Wildland Urban Interface: Lessons from Southern California. Presentation. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/545a90ede4b026480c02c5c7/t/578d5aad3e00bef453aea6eb/1468881611437/Syphard_WUIFire_AEPApril5_reduced.pdf

[3] Institute for Business and Home Safety. 2008. *Mega Fires: The Case for Mitigation.* The Witch Creek Wildfire, October 21 – 31, 2007.

RO-7-28 The comment discusses wildfire occurrence, effects on native habitats, and states the proposed Project would endanger lives of people and animals by placing homes in area of fire susceptibility. Please refer to the Draft EIR (2015) Section 2.6, and the Fire Protection Plan for Alternative H (Appendix D-21) for more information regarding the specific measures provided to Alternative H that result in a fire safe community built and maintained to ignition-resistant levels appropriate for its wildland urban interface locations fire protection system. It should be noted that roughly 70 percent of San Diego County is designated as very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ). The areas that have not received this designation are the urbanized areas. The fact that an area is designated as a VHFHSZ does not preclude development but indicates that additional measures are required to address the increased likelihood of wildfire. The Project incorporates all of the required measures and provides for a comprehensive wildfire protection approach that has been shown to perform well in wildfires. Further, the American Planning Association recently published a Planning Advisory Service (PAS 594 – April 2019) Report titled "Planning the Wildland-Urban Interface." This planning document is consistent with Alternative H's approach to fire protection, including vegetation management, areas of refuge, building ignition resistance and construction, access and secondary access, and water supplies, among others.

RO-7-29 The comment states that "human-caused wildfires at the urban wildland interface that burn through developments … increase the frequency and toxicity of smoke exposure to communities in and downwind of the fires." The County notes that the proposed Project's post-development condition would diminish the ability of a wildfire to spread as it has historically in the Project vicinity. More specifically, the proposed Project's landscaped and irrigated areas and fuel modification/management zones, as well as the paved roadways and ignition-resistant structures, would result in reduced fire intensity and spread rates around the proposed Project vicinity, creating defensible space for firefighters. Additionally, provisions for a fire station on the Project site would meet the County threshold of a 5-minute response time to wildfire ignitions within the Project boundary and increase the likelihood of successful initial attacks that limit the spread of wildfires. This fire station would also become part of the regional fire service delivery plan for the SDCFA for this portion of the County and would support fire and emergency service provision in neighboring communities. Modern infrastructure and the latest ignition-resistant construction methods and materials would be used by Project-related development. Further, all structures are required to include interior, automatic fire sprinklers that are consistent with the fire codes.

Importantly, the Otay Ranch Resort Village 13 – Alternative H Fire Protection Plan (Appendix D-21 to the FEIR) provides details regarding the restrictive requirements necessary to build in wildland urban interface locations in the County, along with "beyond code" measures that ensure the proposed Project results in a "fire-hardened community."

RO-7-30 The comment states that increased fire frequency due to human activity leads to increased occurrences of poor indoor and outdoor air quality from smoke, and that increases in hospital visits for respiratory symptoms have been observed during and after fire events. The comment further states the health impacts communities will suffer if developments are placed in fire-prone shrublands are not thoroughly considered. In response, the proposed Project would not result in

increases in the frequency or severity of human-caused wildfires. Please refer to Response to Comment RO-7-26 for details regarding why the proposed Project would not increase fire frequency or severity of human-caused wildfires.

RO-7-31 The commenter states the threatened Thorne's hairstreak butterfly on Otay Mountain would be at risk from a large fire in the area. The Draft EIR (2015) Section 2.3, indicates that there is no Thorne's hairstreak or their habitat located within the Village 13 boundary. The commenter's concern is that development will result in fire and impact the Otay mountain population of Thorne's hairstreak butterfly.

RO-7-32 The comment states that endangered and threatened plant species in the Project area could be eliminated by construction, pollution, recreation, and fire. The comment also specifically refers to San Diego ambrosia (*Ambrosia pumilla*). In response, impacts to special-status plant species as a result of implementation of Alternative H have been quantified and addressed by mitigation measures including conveyance of preserve land, restoration plan preparation, and resource and salvage (Appendix D-3). Multi-year surveys for rare plants included search for San Diego ambrosia in 1999, 2000, 2002, 2009, and 2015. The species was not detected onsite. Indirect impacts are addressed by a number of mitigation measures designed to protect special-status species including M-B-1b, biological monitoring; M-BI-1c, temporary fencing; B-BI-1e, establishment of a Limited Building Zone; M-BI-1f, permanent fencing and signage; M-BI-13, develop a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan; and M-BI-14, cover stockpiles during construction, prevention of toxic substances entering the preserve, avoidance of planting invasive species, and dewatering in accordance with NPDES. In addition, the proposed Project is required to prepare an Edge Plan that addresses the area 100 feet from the edge of the Preserve. The Edge Plan addresses drainage, toxic substances, lighting, noise, invasive species, and fuel modification. Thus, with the Edge Plan and the mitigation measures, indirect impacts to species and vegetation are avoided.

RO-7-33 The comment states that development and urbanization are a primary threat to the endangered San Diego thornmint, and increased fire risk is also noted to have a significant impact. The comment also states "proximity of development to occurrences of this species leads to non-native plant competition, trampling, fragmentation, and increased isolation in many cases." In response, Alternative H avoids the area where the large population of San Diego thornmint is located. This area is a total of 13.6 acres that includes the area of San Diego thornmint plus a buffer. The area is designated as development under the MSCP; however, the area will be avoided, protected, fenced with appropriated signage provided and will be designated as Conserved Open Space. The Conserved Open space will either be conveyed to the POM for management or will have a site-specific RMP and manager to provide management and monitoring, of which an important task is to prevent and remove non-native invasive species. Thus, with the approved Project, the population will receive management.

RO-7-34 The commenter states the proposed Project would result in ongoing threats to San Diego thornmint, including introduction of non-native species and unauthorized recreation in the Preserve. Please see the Response to Comment RO-7-33

RO-7-35 The commenter notes that Project development will diminish the character of a rural community, contribute to urban sprawl, and worsen traffic congestion. Recirculated Chapter 4.0 and Traffic Impact Analysis for Alternative H (Appendix D-12) have thoroughly analyzed all transportation facilities identified in the Project study area and these analyses were performed in accordance to requirements and standards for the County of San Diego, the City of Chula Vista, and Caltrans. Note that traffic generation by the Jamul Casino (formerly Hollywood Casino) was considered and included as background traffic under both 2025 and 2030 scenarios. Although only one traffic-related impact would remain significant and unavoidable once the necessary agreements are made between the Project applicants and the County of San Diego and City of Chula Vista, all other impacts would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation measures. A significant and unavoidable impact was identified at the intersection of SR-94 and Otay Lakes Road in the Year 2025. The recommended mitigation measure is to install a traffic signal; however, since this intersection is located in Caltrans' right-of-way, and Caltrans does not have a plan or program in place where the Project application could pay its fair-share towards the cost of such improvement, the impact was considered significant and unavoidable. Impacts to air pollution and noise that would result from traffic associated with Alternative H are analyzed in the Recirculated Chapter 4.0 and Appendices D-11 and D-12.

RO-7-36 The comment discusses potential negative side effects associated with noise and air pollution both to humans and wildlife. However, the comment does not make a statement about the adequacy of the environmental analysis, nor does it make a specific comment about the material in the 2019 Recirculation Package. Therefore, no further response to this comment is provided.

RO-7-37 The comment states that the EIR does not view the proposed Project "independently from other planned developments in the region" and needs to address the cumulative effects of the proposed Project. Cumulative impacts for all issue areas have been analyzed in their respective sections of the Draft EIR (2015) and/or 2019 Recirculation Package. Section 1.7 of the Draft EIR (2015) provides a list of all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects on which the cumulative analysis is based. In addition to the analysis, mitigation measures have been identified to reduce impacts where applicable.

RO-7-38 The commenter raises a concern about the analysis of cumulative impacts for greenhouse gas emissions, noise, air pollution, and habitat fragmentation. Cumulative impacts for all of these issue areas have been analyzed in their respective sections of the Draft EIR (2015) and Chapter 4.0 of the 2019 Recirculation Package. Further, mitigation measures have been identified to reduce impacts.

RO-7-39 The comment expresses the commenter's opposition to the proposed Project as currently proposed. The comment states the EIR misleads the reader as to the impact of the proposed Project and that a rewritten cumulative impact analysis is needed. Please see Responses to Comments RO-7-37 and RO-7-38 regarding the cumulative impact analysis.